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Economic and Social Council

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Substantive session of 2010
New York, 28 June-22 July 2010
Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*
High-level segment: annual ministerial review: implementing the internationallyagreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Hope for the Nations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-36707 (E) 160610

Please recycle

Statement

Hope for the Nations, in its role as coordinator for the United Nations NGO Informal Regional Network in North America, invited Canadian non-governmental organizations, activists from interested humanitarian organizations and socially engaged youth to participate in a forum and workshop held in Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada in April 2010. The topic of discussion was "implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women".

The forum and workshop were held in conjunction with a community-wide "global citizen week". The week featured a variety of events centred around the Millennium Development Goals, including presentations by youth, art exhibits and music concerts, that raised awareness of the Goals and global citizenship within the community at large.

The forum and workshop facilitated communication among the participating Canadian non-governmental organizations and youth and promoted capacity-building in the non-governmental organization community. Delegates listened to presentations given by representatives of various non-governmental organizations on gender equality and empowerment of women (see www.ngonetworks.com), and participants formed working groups to discuss the recommendations to be presented to the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2010 of the Economic and Social Council, on behalf of Canadian civil society. The topic addressed was "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women". The general recommendations that emerged include:

(a) The achievement of equality in educational attainment for females and males at all levels. While universal primary education (Goal 2) for both females and males is critical, parity in educational attainment worldwide is a prerequisite to gender equality and empowerment of women. This education must be inclusive, culturally relevant and holistic, utilizing methodologies that best achieve educational objectives;

(b) The eradication of structural barriers to gender equality and empowerment of women (both formal and informal). Both formal and informal structural barriers that impede gender equality and empowerment of women exist worldwide. These include impediments to education for females, lack of access to health care, poverty, family obligations, the need to work to supplement family income, lack of post-schooling employment opportunities and some Government policies that are specific to women and impede gender equality;

(c) Embracing the principle that gender equality is a fundamental human right. While cultural understandings of gender equality exist, universal equality as a right of all humanity must be respected and embraced;

(d) Ensuring that women have a voice in their communities that is listened to. Gender equality requires that females participate equally in discussions in society. Listening to women's voices is essential for their empowerment;

(e) The examination and appropriate eradication of traditional barriers to the empowerment of women and gender equality. Formal State policies and informal practices in civil society must be culturally relevant and gender-neutral. In some cases, active policies to support women are necessary.

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Substantive session of 2010
New York, 28 June-22 July 2010
Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*
High-level segment: annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by International Federation of Family Associations of Missing Persons from Armed Conflicts, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-36713 (E) 160610

Please recycle

Statement

War is the ultimate crisis. All families face hardships post-conflict, but families with members missing as a result of war, specifically the male breadwinner, suffer further adversities.

During war, women are victims of direct and indirect violence. Women are beaten and raped, and made to watch their children being butchered in front of them, while there are continual threats to butcher remaining family members if the women are not cooperative.

Whether the violence is direct or indirect, the effect is the same. These women suffer low self-esteem with feelings of abandonment, helplessness and shame about what happened to them. When they have husbands missing as a result of war, their grief is compounded. These vulnerable women are now head of the household. In essence, they are taken out of their comfort zone, namely their traditional family role, and placed in a new role for which they have no experience, training or community support.

Since their spouse is not dead but "missing", there is no death certificate, without which women cannot remarry and have a male head of household. They cannot gain access to bank accounts to pay for family necessities, cannot inherit land, and often leave the only home they have known with their children. Without training, women cannot work to provide on going support for their families.

Our organization, the International Federation of Family Associations of Missing Persons from Armed Conflicts, forms family associations to implement family-empowerment programmes that teach women self-reliance, focusing on the family's strength. We have successfully implemented innovative projects to address new concepts of the rights and responsibilities of the family unit as a whole and the importance of empowering women to take on new roles when the family dynamics change. Families surviving war do not have the same dynamics as they had before the war, becoming the silent victims of armed conflicts.

Our programmes allow women to express their feelings of helplessness in a supportive network, and to heal their pain and suffering while building their confidence and recognition of the skills needed to handle the new responsibilities thrust upon them. They shed the persona of the victim needing protection and are empowered to become active, self-confident partners in the family and society as a whole.

As stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the family group unit is the foundation upon which society is structured. A family cannot be restored to stability piecemeal. The entire family must be treated as a whole for successful family growth. Our programmes are centred on the "family unit" as the fundamental core of the recovery process. We believe that only by healing families as a group unit, can the Millennium Development Goals be met.

The Federation respectfully requests that new initiatives and action proposals for the Economic and Social Council recognize the fundamental rights and importance of the family group unit maintained, and develop innovative gender-responsive policies for women who are forced to assume new family roles as a result of family members missing in armed conflicts.

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Item 2(b) of the provisional agenda*
Development Cooperation Forum

Statement submitted by the Centre de Formation aux Techniques Informatiques, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Counci

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-36719X (E) 060510 150610

Statement

The Centre de Formation aux Techniques Informatiques is grateful to the Economic and Social Council for its invitation to civil society organizations to submit written statements in the framework of the Development Cooperation Forum. In the light of the economic crisis that the world has known since September 2008, the themes of development cooperation in times of crisis and new commitments to achieve the Millennium Development Goals are highly relevant.

The economic crisis, which started in the United States as a result of the malfunctioning of the United States banking system, has spread worldwide. This economic crisis, which Africa has not caused, has virtually annihilated the efforts and sacrifices made by Africans for years to escape extreme poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Africa has been hit hard by this crisis. According to the International Labour Organization report on global trends in employment, the number of vulnerable workers who have been thrown into poverty has risen from 45 million to over 100 million.

The Centre de Formation aux Techniques Informatiques calls upon the international community to redouble their efforts in the areas of governance and solidarity.

The Centre de Formation aux Techniques Informatiques encourages African countries to join and vigorously implement the African Peer Review Mechanism. The fundamental objective of the Mechanism is to encourage the adoption of policies, standards and practices aimed at promoting political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and subregional and continental economic integration, which could be accelerated through the sharing of experiences and reinforcement of best practices and achievements, including the identification of deficiencies and the assessment of needs in the area of capacity-building.

The Centre de Formation aux Techniques Informatiques urges greater efforts to regulate international economic activity under the aegis of the United Nations. Norwegian economists have estimated that approximately 20 per cent of the funds deposited in tax havens come from developing countries, which amounts to between $2,200 billion and $2,400 billion or thirty times what developing countries receive in aid. Tax evasion in developing countries amounts to about 10 times the quantity of aid provided by rich countries and about 6 to 8.7 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of those countries. By comparison, the tax revenues of the poorest countries account for 13 per cent of their GDP.

Just as there is an international tribunal for crimes against humanity, there could be an international tribunal for economic crimes.